

Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Assessment Update March 2008

The Governor's Panel met twice in 2007 and resumed their meetings following the legislative session in March 2008.

The Panel's overall purpose is to examine assessment in the state and work toward a system that informs instruction and provides excellent information for parents, students and teachers. The Governor has further charged the group with working to cut back on the number of tests and testing days, and specifically to study other or additional methods for assessing basic skills and determining successful high school completion.

In the March meeting, the Panel's focus was on streamlining and articulating assessment from secondary school through college and university admissions and placement. Panel members received comprehensive information about the ACT test, along with the accompanying assessments of EXPLORE (for possible 8th grade use) and PLAN (for possible 10th grade use). The three tests are called the EPAS system. The Panel also reviewed the Work Keys assessment for career and technology skills and interests.

The Panel also received information about Accuplacer, the college placement test used in all Utah colleges and universities except UVSC, and COMPASS, the placement test used at UVSC.

The Panel discussed the possibilities of adding these assessments onto the current U-PASS Accountability program, or having some of these assessments take the place of some tests associated with U-PASS. Some key issues are:

- Costs of the full EPAS (ACT, EXPLORE, PLAN) assessment package
- How EPAS matches the Utah core curriculum or vice versa
- Planning for a full evaluation of any changes to U-PASS
- Types of accommodations EPAS and college placement tests offer to enable full access by students with disabilities and English Language Learners
- How/if current U-PASS assessments are helpful to teachers, parents and students in guiding instruction and making placement choices

- How “high stakes” may be applied to the use of certain assessment types, including potential high stakes associated with performance-based pay
- Increasing counseling options for students and parents
- Should all high school students take assessments to guide them toward college and university work?
- Should successful high school completion emphasize basic skills or college-ready skills?
- Taking advantage of commercial assessment options rather than developing tests at the USOE

The next meeting of the Panel is April 22 in Sevier District where the focus will be on K-12 assessment for learning, where the emphasis is on utilizing assessments to inform instruction.